

Paul the Conqueror

Mary Redington Ely

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PAUL THE CONQUEROR

By

MARY REDINGTON ELY

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TO MY FATHER

Henry G. Ely

*Who fought the good fight,
Who finished his course,
Who kept the faith.*



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FOREWORD

This little book is sent out in the hope that it may open some new avenues of thought and study about the character and achievements of the great apostle. It does not seek, as its primary emphasis, to deal with historical or critical questions. It does not aim to present in detail Paul's contribution to Christian theology. The hope is rather that, viewing in a simple way the thought, the work, and the life of Paul in its own setting, it may suggest the meaning of that work, thought, and life for our to-day. Through these brief studies it is hoped that some new glimpses may be gained of the problems that Paul met, and of the quality of life that he brought to bear upon them. Its goal cannot be attained, however, unless the glimpses thus gained lead forward the thought of those who use these studies, to estimate the meaning of the problems in our world to-day, and the value of Paul's way of living in the society that we know. To suggest some ways of approach to acquaintance with a powerful personality, that the contagion of that personality may contribute to effective Christian living to-day, is the final purpose of this book.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mr. Harold H. Tryon of the Union Theological Seminary, New York City, for stimulating criticism while the

studies were in preparation, and to my sister, Caroline Denison Ely, without whose encouragement and inspiration the book would not have been possible.

M. R. E.

St. Johnsbury, Vermont

August 14, 1919

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CHAPTER I

I CAN DO ALL THINGS

“I can do all things”—what is the spirit behind these words? Ours is an age of daring and of doing, but not many men would venture an assertion of power like this. “I can do all things”—is it the boasting pride of a young enthusiast, confident in his own power, because having never greatly tried, he has never conspicuously failed? Or is it the unreasoning determination of a man embittered by defeat, who, having suffered the pangs of disappointed egotism, is doggedly denying the fact of failure? “I can do all things”—they are the words of an old man in prison, soon to be tried at Cæsar’s court, and soon to lay down his life. They are words not of boasting, but of humble and self-forgetful triumph through a power that was not his own. “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.” And Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, had put his life back of the words. If his living had not upheld them, we should despise them as the miserable vauntings of a little soul. But the glorious triumph of his life of achievement, and the humility that counted not his own life as dear unto himself (Acts 20:24), had given to the unconquerable spirit a sure foundation of truth and life. To

us in an age when power counts, Paul's dauntless spirit brings challenge and appeal.

Not only through the contagion of his invincible spirit, but by the summons of his life of vigorous activity, Paul sends out his call to us to-day. To read the record of his gigantic task, to see him hastening from city to city, bringing his message from one corner of the empire to another, planning his campaigns like a military general, gathering a force of workers to assist him, utilizing every situation to which he came for the spreading of his message, to see him defying fatigue, illness, opposition, imprisonment, and even death, to accomplish the work that was set before him, is to marvel at the effective energy of his living. To an age that puts efficiency high in its scale of values, Paul speaks through his life of vivid achievement.

Unconquerable in spirit, colossal in his power of accomplishment, Paul brings a challenge to the Christian of to-day. But he speaks to us too in the gospel that he taught. The great ideals for which he worked are those that to-day we are striving to make real in human living. Freedom to think, to act, to live, was the compelling note of his gospel. "We serve in newness of the spirit, not in oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6), "for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6). To bring freedom from the confines of a binding law, and to lay hold on the liberty that is the privilege of sons of God—this was the starting point of his message.

“For all ye are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). “Thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God” (Gal. 4:7).

With his gospel of freedom went also his message of brotherhood. In the glorious breadth and good will of the Christian gospel, were blotted out all distinctions of race and class. “There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). “One man in Christ Jesus”—this was the pivot of his social gospel. The brotherhood for which he worked was to be spiritually founded. It was the expression in human relations of the inner, vital fellowship with Christ which was the main-spring of his own life. The realization of the family ideal, which is the aim of Christian democracy to-day, was the goal of Paul’s Christianity.

“Hearts I have won of sister or of brother
Quick on the earth or hidden in the sod,
Lo, every heart awaiteth me, another
Friend in the blameless family of God.”*

Freedom and brotherhood are ideals that are slow of realization. The hope of their achievement lies in a third of Paul’s great teachings—the gospel of the new start. “Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new” (II Cor. 5:

* Myers: *Saint Paul*.

17). The "new man" can look back without bitterness and without fear upon the mistakes of the past, and can look forward with courage to the broad inviting fields of new endeavor. The "new man" has taken the road of progress, and forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, he can press on toward the goal. Freedom, brotherhood, progress, these are the rallying cries of our world to-day. To an age that asks for leadership toward these ideals, Paul the Apostle has a living gospel to speak.

To a weak, struggling Christian community, with a leadership that, though loyal, was all too imperfect, came Paul of Tarsus, who had seen Jesus on the Damascus road and who had heard his call to service. His pioneer vision and his tireless leadership saved the early church from a narrow, exclusive existence and opened the way for a world-wide Christianity. "He was the greatest missionary of the age, and in him the Gospel fought its mightiest battles and won its most splendid victories."† But Paul's service cannot be measured by his gift to his own time. Great as that service was, it was only the beginning of the work he was to do. His work as a pioneer in the first century was in reality a gift to all the generations of Christians who have followed him, because in his living and his thinking he was touching at great, persistent human needs.

† McGiffert: *The Apostolic Age*, p. 423.

In his spirit of triumphant courage, in his life of stupendous achievement, in his gospel of freedom, of brotherhood, and of progress, he is speaking to our age as really as he did to the first century. To us there comes ringing across all these years, his challenge to life, his appeal to service. To the great adventure of Christian living, Paul the Apostle calls to-day, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."

CHAPTER II

A JEW OF TARSUS

Acts 21: 39; 22: 27-28; 26: 5; Phil. 3: 4-5;
II Cor. 11: 22; Deut. 6

“I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city.”

Paul was proud to claim his connection with the place of his birth. And Tarsus was a city worthy of that pride. Standing in the broad, fruitful plain, between the Tarsus Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea, it was the meeting place for the long caravans of camels that came along the trade routes across the mountains, and the great merchant ships that came sailing up the river from the sea. Back among those snow-clad peaks that sheltered the city on the north, there was one narrow gateway that led out into the broad plains beyond the mountains. The Cilician Gates, as they were called, had served in olden days as the door between East and West for the great armies of the Greeks and Persians. Now the roadway carried Roman legions from the city that was the center of the Mediterranean world out to her provinces in the East. And the trade of both the East and the West found its highway here.

Tarsus, because it stood at this meeting place

for trade and travel between East and West, had become the dwelling place of many nationalities and races. Greeks, Romans, and Jews all found their home within her gates, and with the ships that came up the river from the Mediterranean, and with the caravans that came down from the mountains, came sailors and tradesmen from the far eastern lands, from the islands of the sea, and from the country of the Nile.

Paul's Early Home

In a busy, cosmopolitan city like this, Paul spent the early years of his life. Try to picture him as a boy, alert, keen, and responsive as he must have been to all the interests of life about him, and try to imagine what his life would be in the midst of this great commercial city. Shipping in the river that led to the great harbor only ten miles away, raft driving to float down the river the logs cut in the mountains, trading between the dwellers in the city and the travelers who came along the trade routes, bargaining in the market place of such fervor as only Orientals know—all these would claim the interest of a growing boy and would lead his imagination far beyond the limits of his own home life. Touch with the life of the world and knowledge of men and affairs came naturally to him, as they never could have come in a little provincial town.

But Tarsus was more than a city of commercial interests; it was a great university town. In no

other city, unless it were in Athens or in Alexandria, would Paul have come in contact with such an earnest love of letters as he saw in Tarsus, or so close an application to the study of philosophy and the religious cults of the time. Athenodorus, who was the greatest teacher of his day and the tutor of Cæsar Augustus, had lived in Tarsus just before the time of Paul and had helped to make the university known in all the world. And so with the traders, the sailors, and the men of business, there came another type of stranger within the gates of Tarsus, men of the meditative, scholarly type, the thinkers of the day, who came together to discuss the problems of thought that puzzled the minds of men. Paul would catch glimpses of groups of students gathered in the schools along the banks of the river, and stories of the poets and teachers and orators who came to the university would fire his imagination and quicken his zeal for the learning of the Greek world.

His Touch with Greek Thought and Life

For Tarsus, though a city of the eastern Mediterranean, was Greek in its language and its thought. From the earliest days of its history, it had been touched with the influence of Greece, for its first traders had been Greek sailors from the Ægean, and always Greeks had been among its settlers. At the time of Alexander's conquests, three hundred years before Paul was born, Greek armies had filled the Cilician plains, and never after that did Tarsus

lose the spirit of Greek thought and life. Jew though he was, Paul could not fail to grow in sympathy with the Greek world, because "he had inhaled the language and the soul of Hellenism with the air of Tarsus."* In its uniting of widely differing interests, in its gathering of men of different races and customs, in its own civic history, growing from a simple oriental town to a Greek free city, and then to a center of Roman imperialism, Tarsus could well claim its title as the meeting place of the eastern and western worlds.

Touch with the world of affairs, the hum of business, and the broad interests of a city that was both commercial and educational—this was the first schooling of Paul of Tarsus. It was training in tolerance, in sympathy with men, and in independence of thought. Surely it was an influence guiding him, even though unconsciously, into the "mystic bond of brotherhood that makes all men one."

Compare the early environment of Paul with that of Jesus, and note the essential differences between them.

Can you find evidences in their words that they carried to mature life the impress of the early surroundings? List such as occur to you.

His Jewish Home

The home of Paul's boyhood was a world of activity, busy with the concerns of men, but in a certain sense, his family was in it and not of it.

* Deissmann: *Saint Paul*, p. 43.

His people belonged to that company of Jews who had gone forth from their own land and had settled among aliens, but whose hopes and desires were still centered upon the land and people left behind. They never identified themselves wholly with the new community life but remained a peculiar people, cherishing their own faith, adhering to their old traditions, and zealously guarding the customs of their fathers. Read Phil. 3:4-5, Rom. 11:1, II Cor. 11:22, Acts 26:5, and Acts 23:6, and notice Paul's pride in this Jewish inheritance and in all the religious significance of such a heritage as his.

We have no record of the home life that he knew, but it is not hard to imagine the conditions that prevailed there. We know the Jewish family ideals, the strict adherence to the formalities of religion in the home, the respect for the minute details of the law, the cherishing of traditions and ideals from the past, the reverence for authority, and the stern effort to withstand any taint of alien influence. These ideals would be the more earnestly sought in a home of the stricter sort, such as Paul's must have been. "After the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee" (Acts 26:5). We can picture the child of such a home listening to stories of the great heroes of the Hebrew faith, thrilling with pride at the intrepid deeds of those men of old, and yielding his own allegiance to the faith for which they lived.

Even more stirring to a boy like Paul than the tales of the great heroes of the past, would be the stories told him of the hope of the Jewish people. He would hear how one day there would come a leader of the people who would make of them a nation to rule all the world. Those would be the great days for the chosen people of God, and always they must be watching and waiting and preparing for that time. And until that day, they must keep the commandments and honor the law and keep themselves apart from other nations, a people holy and blameless before God. These were thoughts that would quicken the imagination and thrill the heart of a boy, and he would resolve to do his part to make the nation ready for the Day of the Lord. But his part at present meant duties not wholly inviting to a lively, active boy. There were minute ceremonies to be observed, and there were long passages of the Law and the Prophets that must be learned by heart. In such a home as his the old command would surely be observed:

“And these words which I command thee this day shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house.” (Deut. 6: 6-7.)

Paul's ready command of scripture and the naturalness with which he turns to it later in his letters bears testimony to the fact that the ancient command was honored in his home. Though a citizen

of Tarsus, Paul was brought up to be a "Hebrew of the Hebrews."

What would be the natural contributions of such training as Paul received in his home, to his character and equipment for life?

What elements in it would further his work as a Christian missionary?

What elements would hinder that work?

In what form is the exclusive ideal of the Pharisees present in modern Christianity?

His Roman Citizenship

A Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, and living in the midst of a civilization that was Greek in spirit, Paul was also a Roman citizen. As a boy in Tarsus he was accustomed to the sight of Roman soldiers, for Tarsus, though Greek in its spirit and its language, was a free city of the Roman empire. And as he came to see the splendid discipline of the legions of the empire, and heard how they had fought to make one city ruler of all the world, and as he heard the travelers who came to Tarsus telling of Rome's splendid laws and her great system of roads, Paul would be glad to remember that citizenship in this great empire was his by right of inheritance. How this right of citizenship came to Paul's father, we do not know, but we are sure that it was a source of pride to Paul that he could say, "I am a Roman born" (Acts 22:28). The fact that citizenship afforded protection, and gave

him special privileges before the law and prestige among his fellows, made it a privilege to be esteemed, but perhaps even more important was its effect upon his thinking as he was growing to manhood.

In his sense of partnership in the greatest administrative enterprise of the age, Paul was broadening his thought and making real in his consciousness the idea of a world-family. A world-family in government could later become in his thought a world-family in faith and in brotherhood, and we are not surprised to hear Paul the Roman saying in his later years to his Christian brethren, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). The dignity of citizenship in a world empire had become to him a symbol of the spiritual calling of man. And even as a child in Tarsus, hearing of the prowess of the great empire, and feeling himself a part of that broad movement that was sweeping all the earth, he was growing in the breadth of mind and the largeness of vision that were later to make him not merely a citizen of Rome, but a citizen "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27).

Reared in a Jewish home, but touched by the busy life of a great city of the Greek world, and caught into the spirit of a world empire, Paul began all unconsciously his training for his apostleship of Jesus Christ. As he looked back in later years on these beginnings of his schooling in life, he wrote that God had "separated" him from his very birth

and "called" him "through his grace" (Gal. 1: 15). No wonder that he recognized in the facts of this experience a special training for the task that was to carry him into many lands and make him a messenger to many peoples.

QUESTIONS

1. What were the advantages for Paul in his early environment in Tarsus?
2. Of what value to him would be the influence of the Greek culture of this city?
3. What contributions to his moral and religious equipment would come from his training in a strict Jewish home?
4. What would be the influence of the Roman citizenship on his ideals? On his conduct?
5. In what ways would these strains of influence tend to counteract one another? In what ways would they strengthen one another?
6. In his whole environment and experience as a child, what elements tended to develop and strengthen Paul's religious interest?
7. What stimulus to his religious life, similar to that which Paul received, does the average child of to-day receive? What in addition? What does he lack?
8. What constructive suggestions can you give for the improvement of religious education in America to-day?

SUGGESTED READING

Deissmann: St. Paul. Ch. 4.

Mathews: Paul the Dauntless. Ch. 2.

Wood: The Life and Ministry of Paul the Apostle. Ch. 2.

Ramsay: St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen. Ch. 2.

Ramsay: The Cities of St. Paul. pp. 85 ff.

CHAPTER III

AT THE FEET OF GAMALIEL

Acts 22: 3; 26: 4; 5: 34-40

A Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Roman citizen, a child of Greek civilization and culture, Paul of Tarsus looked out upon life, confident by reason of the heritage that was his. Disciplined in body and mind by the rigorous training of the Jewish home and school, keen and alert in his thinking, he faced the day of his departure from home, we may well imagine, as a young adventurer faring forth in search of conquest.

Paul's Trade

Already, in accordance with the Jewish custom, Paul made himself master of a trade or handcraft that should be his resource in time of need. His was the trade of a tentmaker, naturally enough, since the most important industry of his native city was the weaving of coarse cloth from the long hair of the goats that pastured on the Cilician hills, and the fashioning from it of tent covers ready to be used for shelter by the wandering peoples of the East. Read I Thess. 2: 9, Acts 18: 3, Acts 20: 34-35, and note how this skill stood Paul in good stead

later. Now, as he was setting forth on the first great adventure of his life, it would be counted a valuable part of his equipment, giving him a wholesome confidence in his own powers.

Early Education

Already he had outstripped the boys of his own age in the learning that the Jewish schools of his own city afforded (see Gal. 1:14), and was eager for new intellectual tasks. And what was this learning that he had gained in the schools of Tarsus? We do not know exactly, but perhaps he would learn to read and write in Aramaic, the spoken language of the Jews at that time, and surely he must learn to read Hebrew, the sacred language of the Law and the Prophets. Perhaps it was here that he began the study of the Greek Bible from which he quotes so readily in his letters. Certainly he was memorizing portions of the law, and growing steadily more familiar with the history and the traditions of his fathers. In the house of prayer as well, he would be growing in the knowledge of the law and in the appreciation of the glorious past of Israel's religion. The synagogue stood as the center of the Jewish community life, and thither as a boy Paul must have been taken by his parents, not only on Sabbaths but for week-day services as well. Here in the recitation of the law, in the prayers, and in the reading of the scriptures, even the young boys might take part, and they

could feel themselves sharing in the family life of this chosen people of God.

Summing up the influence of home, school, and synagogue in Tarsus, in how far do you feel that Paul would be strengthened by it for his life task

- (a) In intellectual power?
- (b) In self-control?
- (c) In friendliness and sympathy with men?

In how far would it tend to limit him along these lines?

Show how his training tended to emphasize to him the dignity of manual labor.

As a child, Paul must have heard much of Jerusalem, the home city of his faith. Like the exiles of olden days, Jews who lived away from the fatherland would yearn for the inspiration and joy of worship in the holy city, and would repeat with genuine feeling the psalmist's song:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning."

(Ps. 137: 5.)

Jews of Tarsus who went as pilgrims to the feasts in Jerusalem would return with wonderful stories of the great palace that Herod had built, of the gardens about it, of his theater and gymnasium, of the Roman garrison tower, but most of all of the temple itself, that glorious structure of shining white stone and flashing gold, whose beauty symbolized to all the Jewish people the glory of their

faith and the holiness of their worship of the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

Stories of the people gathered from many cities, of the crowded temple courts, of the sacrifices and festal processions would come back with the pilgrims from the feasts and would claim Paul's interest. But best of all to a boy who had chosen to become a rabbi, a leader in the faith, an interpreter of the law, would be the stories of the temple schools, where the great teachers of the time sat daily, each with his group of students about him, expounding the law, arguing the minute points of its application, and discussing the great historic question that had come down from the prophets of old, the coming of Israel's Messiah.

Training in Jerusalem

Such was the life to which Paul came when he left the schools of his home city. At exactly what age he went we do not know, but if he went at the normal age for such a step, it would be when he was from thirteen to sixteen years of age. And it would be a significant change from a city of such broad and cosmopolitan interests as Tarsus to this city that was the historic home of the Jewish faith. However many the strangers from other lands and races who were within her gates, Jerusalem was always, first and last, the city of David, "builded as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up" (Ps. 122:3-4). An ancient prophet had foretold that many nations should come unto her,

but they were to come because she had wisdom and instruction to give,

“for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem (Is. 2: 3).

No external touch of foreign influence or power could dominate the inner course of her life. In the midst of evidences of Roman occupation, the life of the Jewish community went on, cherishing its traditions from the past, and looking for the day when the center of the whole earth should be the throne of the house of David. Within her walls there was a unity of interest, a solidarity of national feeling that could not be disturbed, and here, as in no other surroundings in all the world, would a Jewish student grow to revere and honor the past, to take pride in the religious heritage that was his, and to found his hope on the hope of his race.

To a student like Paul the temple would be the center of his life. Here he would go daily to join a group of students who sat in one of the pillared porches at the feet of some teacher of the law. Here he would share in the sacred services, the feasts, and the morning and evening sacrifices. Here he would give his best as a student, to honor the Law and the Prophets. But close by the temple on the north, stood another building toward which he would also look with pride, Castle Antonia, the symbol of Rome's power here in this far-away country of Palestine. To many a Jew in Jerusalem, this Roman garrison would be a hateful thing, a

reminder that the glory of the house of Israel had gone down in defeat before the might of empire. As a Jew, Paul would share this resentment and would look forward to the day when a prince of the house of David should rule over an empire that would be eternal.

But he must have looked with mingled feelings on a sight like this, for as a Roman citizen, he would thrill with pride that he had a part in all this military dignity and imperial sway. As he saw the soldiers guarding the castle, heard the clank of arms against the stonework, or caught the gleam of a helmet flashing in the sun, perhaps there would rise to his thought the question, why he, who had the right to share in the greatness of this mighty empire, had come away eastward to take up a student's life. Perhaps it would startle a longing within him to cast aside all these minute cavilings with an ancient law, and take his part in the military glory of an empire that could sway the whole world. The broad, free highways to Rome were always open and alluring, but he had chosen the path of a pilgrim to the holy city. His hope was built on a surer foundation than any power of empire. With the psalmist he could say:

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place

In all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth,

Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,

Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

(Ps. 90: 1-2.)

Gamaliel

The Jewish scheme for the education of a religious leader put heavy responsibility upon his teacher. An old admonition that pointed out to a student his proper attitude toward his teachers, told him to "powder himself in the dust at their feet and to drink in their words with thirstiness." For a glimpse of the teacher under whom Paul studied, read Acts 22:3, Acts 5:34-40.

What estimate would you form of the man from these passages?

What would be the general trend of his influence?

The nature of the study in Jerusalem would be similar to that in the Jewish school of Tarsus in its emphasis upon the law as the heart of religion, but here the study would be more detailed, and at the same time, more extensive. The memorizing of both the written and the oral law, the discussion of minute rules for conduct, the interpretation of detailed points of law, and speculation in regard to the promised Messianic age, would be the central points in the educational program of the future rabbi.

What traits did this training tend to develop in Paul—

Originality? or reverence for the traditional?

Breadth of thought? or satisfaction with the truth as already revealed?

Readiness for action? or an inclination to withdraw from life for speculation?

Resourcefulness? or a tendency to act according to prescribed rules?

In the light of your answers to these questions, what do you consider was Paul's real equipment for living, as a result of this experience in Jerusalem?

Had he continued his career as a Jewish rabbi, what elements in his training would have been of special value to him?

In the career to which he actually came what elements were valuable?

As Paul came to the end of these years of study in Jerusalem, he faced his work as rabbi with earnestness and seriousness of purpose. The experience at Jerusalem had but strengthened his conviction that in the keeping of the law was the salvation of both the individual and the nation. To the proclaiming of this gospel he now dedicated every power. The enthusiasm and vigor of his youth, the confidence that came from his heritage and training, the soundness of his conviction, confirmed by the authority of his teachers in Jerusalem—all these sent him forth burning with the desire to make his message live and bear fruit in his nation, the chosen people of God. He was an apostle to the Jews of the historic faith of Judaism.

QUESTIONS

1. Make a list of the aims which you think Paul would have stated as his at the time when he completed his training at Jerusalem.
2. How many of them would be included in the purpose of a Christian to-day?
3. What were the outstanding characteristics of the religion that Paul was studying at Jerusalem?
4. What elements in Paul's training and experience thus far had fitted him to be a leader in such a faith?
5. In what ways would Gamaliel's influence strengthen Paul? In what ways would it limit him?
6. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul said, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6). In how far would this have been expressive of his attitude at the close of his training in Jerusalem?
7. How valuable to the modern Christian do you consider rules for conduct?
8. How does religion differ from morality?
9. Read Acts 22:3 and note Paul's own summary of his attitude of mind at this time. What in your own words does it mean?
10. What was the result of this attitude as new light came to Paul?

SUGGESTED READING

Stalker : The Life of St. Paul. Ch. 2.

Mathews : Paul the Dauntless. Chs. 3 and 4.

Wood : The Life and Ministry of Paul the Apostle. Ch. 3.

Robinson : The Life of Paul. Ch. 2.

CHAPTER IV

PERSECUTING THE CHURCH

Acts 5: 17-32; 6; 22: 19-21

During these years of Paul's boyhood and youth, there was growing up in the little village of Nazareth in Galilee, far away from Tarsus, another Jewish boy, who, as He toiled at a carpenter's bench, was cherishing a vision of a world transformed, and was longing to be about his Father's business. He, like Paul, had listened to stories of the great days of Israel's past, and of the hopes of her seers and prophets for her future. He, also, had shared in the synagogue's services and had heard the scribes and the priests teaching that in the keeping of the law lay the way to life. But deep in his heart He knew, as growing to manhood He pondered these things, that a merely outward observance of the law could never bring men to their highest destiny. His it was to teach men that Love is the fulfillment of the law, and to bring to its fullest emphasis the message forecast by Israel's prophets, that in the spirit, and not in the letter of the law, lies the heart of religion.

Jesus of Nazareth

And then there came the time when He must tell his message to the world, and He went about the

countryside, teaching in words so simple and so appealing that even the humble fisherfolk and little children understood and turned to Him; but in words so lofty and so forceful that the great men of the day, the scribes and Pharisees, and the rulers of the synagogue feared Him when they heard of his teaching. And when their anger grew to a hatred that meant death for Him, and they plotted together to see how they might take Him, even then He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and fearlessly taught in the temple. And when they put Him to death, the death of a common criminal, the most humiliating they knew, still his disciples maintained that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that his were the words of eternal life. And although the authorities forbade them to preach about Him and stoned them for persisting, they replied boldly, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). "We cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (Acts 4:20). So the little company was steadily growing of those who gave their allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth and who were purposing to tell the story of his life and of his message.

These were happenings that were stirring the hearts of men in Jerusalem not long after Paul had finished his student days there. Where Paul was at this time we cannot be wholly sure, but even in far-away Tarsus, where quite naturally he might have returned to take some office in the synagogue,

rumors must have come to him of this new leader, who was teaching with such authority things that were utterly at variance with the beliefs that were Paul's very life.

Imagine the conversation which might take place in Tarsus between Paul and a traveler who had been present in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus' ministry. How would such a traveler, if unsympathetic with Jesus, report the story of the last week in Jerusalem and the crucifixion?

Read Deut. 21:22-23 and judge what effect the manner of Jesus' death would have upon a man trained in Jewish thought.

What estimate would Paul be likely to make of the disciples' power to succeed after Jesus' death?

Paul and the Followers of Jesus

On his return to Jerusalem, Paul threw himself, heart and soul, into the task of blotting out this new movement. With what utter consternation he would learn, in more detail, of the activities and the purposes of this new sect! To him it would be unthinkable that a crucified blasphemer should be the long-heralded Messiah, Israel's Prince of the House of David. It would be criminal to allow those who made such claims for Him to continue their activity. Had not the law taught him that it was the duty of every loyal Jew to contend against those who taught heresy in any form? Read Deut. 13:6-11, and note the unequivocal command.

“Neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him.”

To one whose zeal for this religion of Moses was the consuming passion of his life, there seemed to be open but one course of action. With all the fervor and strength at his command, Paul now plunged into the work of bringing this new heresy to an end. This was the first great challenging task of his mature life and to it he brought his best in talent and equipment, keenness of mind, energy and vigor in action, and the assurance that came from thorough training, all backed by a firm conviction that his course was right, and concentrated under a purpose so strong that it knew no thwarting. For Paul's own account of his activity at this time, read Gal. 1:13.

List the influences thus far in Paul's life that had tended to produce this intolerance.

Do you judge him cruel by nature by reason of this conduct?

Paul and Stephen

The orthodox were struggling against the Christians by force, but they were using argument as well. The scene recorded in Acts 6:8-10, must have been typical of many attempts to down this new faith by force of reasoning. Here was a young Jew, of foreign birth as Paul was, brilliant in debate, well versed in the history and the law of

Israel, winning in personality, able to out-argue the whole company of Jews from the provinces, who were gathered at their synagogue in Jerusalem. Read Acts 6:8-10 and estimate Stephen's character and ability. A sketch of his personality as reflected in this passage, has been suggested as follows:

1. Full of faith (vs. 5).
2. Full of the Holy Ghost (vs. 5).
3. Full of power (vs. 8).
4. Full of irresistible energy and power (vs. 10).
5. Full of sunshine (vs. 15).
6. An intrepid witness for God (ch. 7).*

In how far could these same attributes be applied to Paul at this time?

Wherein lay the essential difference in the spirit of these two men?

Read Acts 6:11—8:1 for the remainder of Stephen's story. Note that facing injustice at his trial, he appeared, not as an abused, frightened prisoner, but as a champion of a great cause, a man whose daring faith made his face glow with triumphant courage.

At what point in his defense was the anger of the Jews aroused to the point of attack?

Were his charges against the Jews valid?

Did he answer those that they brought against him?

* D. L. Moody.

What was the aim of his speech?

What was Paul's part in the attack on him?

This is the first mention of Paul in the story of the early church as given in Acts. His first contact with Christianity was that of an antagonist, countenancing the most extreme measures for the sake of rooting out this perverse, heretical sect. To him at this time it doubtless seemed a successful initial step in a program of thorough warfare, and yet there must have been elements in this scene to make him stop and question. The dignity and poise of that winsome young enthusiast, the glory of his triumphant faith, which made his face "as it had been the face of an angel," the prayer that revealed a spirit utterly victorious over self, utterly dedicated to the gospel that he preached—these could not but challenge the thinking of a man like Paul, and startle, if only momentarily, his opposition to a faith that could yield results like these.

Surely the memory of this devoted life, whose ideals were made vivid to him through the contagion of a winning personality, could not be lightly set aside. Was Paul's own allegiance to an ideal, later, even to the point of death, a reflection in any measure of this influence? (See Acts 20:24 and 21:12-14.) Even at the moment, as he sought justification in the ancient law, "Neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare him," the new ideal must have been forcing its way in those ringing words, "Lord, lay not this sin to their

charge.” How often would Paul live over this first touch with the Christian faith, and how often would the recollection express itself in stinging self-reproach, as we know it did in Jerusalem, “And when the blood of Stephen, thy witness, was shed, I also was standing by and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him” (Acts 22 : 20).

“ Stephen, who died while I stood by consenting,
Wrought in his death the making of a life,
Bruised one hard heart to thought of swift repenting,
Fitted one fighter for a nobler strife.

“ Stephen, the Saint, triumphant and forgiving,
Prayed while the hot blows beat him to the earth.
Was that a dying? Rather was it living!
Through his soul’s travail my soul came to birth.

“ Stephen, the Martyr, full of faith and fearless,
Smiled when his bruised lips could no longer pray—
Smiled with a courage undismayed and peerless—
Smiled!—and that smile is with me night and day.

“ O, was it I that stood there all consenting?
I—at whose feet the young men’s clothes were laid?
Was it my will that wrought that hot tormenting?
My heart that boasted over Stephen, dead?

“ Yes, it was I. And sore to me the telling.
Yes, it was I. And thought of it has been
God’s potent spur my whole soul’s might compelling
These outer darknesses for Him to win.”

—*John Oxenham.*

QUESTIONS

1. List the causes that led Paul to his activity against the Christian community.
2. Contrast the gospel which Jesus taught with Paul's conception of religion—
 - (a) In its thought of God.
 - (b) In its program of living.
 - (c) In its attitude toward progress and growth.
 - (d) In its ideal of tolerance.
3. In what forms do we meet legalism in Christianity to-day?
4. Does the liberal element in modern Christianity overbalance to a dangerous degree?
5. In what sense did Paul experience defeat in his contact with Stephen?
6. In what points were the two men at one?
7. State as exactly as you can the points at which their ideals clashed.
8. Was Stephen's influence restricted by the fact that he was a man of lesser gifts than Paul?
9. What had he that Paul lacked at this time?

SUGGESTED READING

Wood: The Life and Ministry of Paul the Apostle. Ch. 4.

Mathews: Paul the Dauntless. Ch. 6.

Stalker: The Life of St. Paul. pp. 34-36.

Robinson: The Life of Paul. pp. 46-50.

Robertson: Epochs in the Life of Paul. Ch. 2.

CHAPTER V

THE HIGH CALLING

Acts 9: 1-9; 22: 3-11; 26: 1-19; Gal. 1: 15-16

“But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house and dragging away men and women, committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3). The challenge in Stephen’s triumphant death drove Paul with a more obstinate determination than ever to the completion of his task. “Breathing out threatenings and slaughter,” he entered upon a relentless course.

Laying Waste the Church

Baffled by the strange paradox he had witnessed in Stephen’s victorious defeat, he dealt his blows with an added vehemence. Was it that serene courage facing death so gloriously that made Paul question, even against his will, the power of his own legal religion to call forth a devotion like that? Was it that supreme victory of love and forgiveness that put to shame his own labored efforts to walk within the confines of the law and urged him to vindicate the righteousness of his purpose? Was it the sting of an almost unacknowledged self-reproach, that he must share the responsibility for ending so gallant a life as this? Or was it the

subtle urge of an inner apprehension, unconfessed even to himself, that somehow he himself must find "that more excellent way" (I Cor. 12:31)?

Spurred to his highest effort, he became a leading spirit in the persecution, and determined not to rest until the church in Jerusalem had been destroyed. Successful to the point of driving the followers of Jesus out of Jerusalem, with what dismay and alarm would he learn of the results of that effort! "They, therefore, that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). All through Judea and Samaria, and even up in the country of Syria and Phœnicia (Acts 11:19), the followers of the Nazarene were standing together for the faith they loved and were spreading their gospel through this wider area. Read Acts 26:9-10, Gal. 1:13, and Phil. 3:6, and note the strength of purpose revealed here. Consider the effect on Paul when the discovery was made that all this activity had had just the opposite effect from the one desired. What would you expect Paul to do? Acts 9:1, Acts 22:5, and Acts 26:12 show the counter-attack he planned.

The Journey to Damascus

Find Damascus on the map. It was a journey of perhaps six days from Jerusalem, northward through the Jordan valley, past the Samaritan hills, skirting the Lake of Galilee, bearing to the east of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, and finally travers-

ing the broad, shadeless plateau which merges into the plain of Damascus. Why, we cannot help wondering, was Damascus selected by Paul as the point of attack in this campaign against the followers of the Nazarene? Was it that this greatest city of the northern country would serve as a more conspicuous example than any city nearer to Jerusalem? Or was it a hope that if the movement were crushed in Jerusalem and Damascus, the impetus for its spread in the intervening country would be lost? Could it have been a combination of this with other business on which he was sent by the high priest? Whatever the reason for his choice of this distant city, when the decision was made, and the papers that gave official countenance to his harsh program were actually in his hand, he would hurry northward with no delays. The long hours of these traveling days would afford ample time for reflection and for the planning of his program of work. But must not many questionings have claimed his thought? Can you imagine what Paul might have been thinking as he journeyed—

(a) About the purpose of his errand?

(b) About the work already accomplished in Jerusalem?

(c) About the death of Stephen, to which he had so lately been a party?

(d) About his own method of work, and its justification in the light of the character and living of those whom he was persecuting?

Could he have failed to meet conflict in his thinking at any one of these points? Is it surprising that Luke uses in one of his accounts of the great transforming experience that met Paul on the last day of the journey, the phrase, "to kick against the goad" (Acts 26:14), as descriptive of Paul's state of mind?

The Revelation

Read carefully Luke's three accounts (Acts 9, 22, and 26) of this crucial event in Paul's life, and compare them with Paul's own words about it in Gal. 1:15-16. The study of the three accounts in Acts reveals the fact that they do not wholly agree as to the external events which accompanied the great experience, but their points of harmony lead us straight to the significant fact that Paul himself names as the heart of the whole experience, his consciousness of the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, and his realization of a call to allegiance and to service from this new Master and Lord. Study Paul's own words that deal with the crisis:

Gal. 1:15-16.

I Cor. 9:1.

Phil. 3:4-12.

I Cor. 15:5-8.

Note how inevitably the emphasis falls upon the inner, spiritual reality, rather than upon the details of outward events. "To reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:16), here is the heart of it for Paul—

Jesus of Nazareth, not a crucified pretender, but the living Son of God. Try to state fully the meaning of this realization to Paul. Follow through its implications for him, and see its leading to the second great message of the experience, "that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal. 1: 16). The intense reality of the whole experience comes home in Paul's unreserved commitment of himself from henceforward, to a living that should make its meaning real to all his fellow men. For him it was the beginning of "all things new." In place of conflicting purposes and baffled effort, it meant the release of all his energy along one line of concentrated effort. It meant a goal worthy of his highest endeavor. It meant "fighting the good fight" (I Tim. 6: 12), and having "whereof to glory in the day of Christ" (Phil. 2: 16). It meant the possession in all circumstances of the "peace that passeth understanding" (Phil. 4: 7). It meant light shining out of darkness, and "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4: 6). But how much of all this could he know when first he put forth his trust and answered, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22: 10.) For the moment, it was a step in the dark; it needed willingness to trust, and to be led as a little child. Like Abraham, Paul "went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11: 8), and like Abraham, he must be ready to bear the risks and the costs of the journey.

The far-reaching results of this reversal of his thinking and living, Paul could not at once grasp. For the time, the sweeping force of it left him helpless and stunned, and he could only yield himself to the care of his companions for the remainder of the journey. Picture to yourself Paul's actual entrance into Damascus, a man shaken and overpowered by the shock he had experienced, and compare with this the reception he had anticipated from those who looked to him for official and capable leadership against the followers of Jesus. Had his thoughts been centered upon himself, the humiliation of it must have conquered him, but there was no room here for little thoughts. Steadily there must have been pressing in upon him the great spiritual message of the experience, and for the sake of this, he could suffer all things—Jesus, the Son of God, from henceforward his Leader, his Lord, and he, Paul, a witness to all the world for Him. Step by step he was to traverse the road from chiefest of opponents to chiefest of advocates, a journey beset with difficulty and hardship, but perhaps no greater victory was won on all the way than this initial triumph that was not aggression, but submission. It was victory of the sternest sort, that in this first great venture of faith, he was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

QUESTIONS

1. Make a list of the points which are common to all three accounts in Acts of the Damascus road experience.
2. What is the significance of these points?
3. Can you account in any way for the points of disagreement?
4. How do you test the reality of the experience to Paul?
5. Compare Paul's realization of his call to service with that of Moses, Samuel, Amos, and Isaiah. What common elements do you find?
6. What conditions did Paul fulfill in order to learn God's will for him?
7. What relation do you find between his attitude in this crucial experience and his former attitude, which he described as "zealous for God"?
8. Such a revelation as came to Paul on the Damascus road could never have come to some men. What had he himself done to make it possible?
9. What forces operate to-day to withhold the modern Christian from alertness and readiness for action in religious matters?
10. How would you state the modern Christian purpose? Was it Paul's?

11. What steps lead to the formation of a Christian purpose to-day? Did Paul take these steps?

SUGGESTED READING

Gardner: The Religious Experience of St. Paul.
Ch. 2.

Robinson: The Life of Paul. Ch. 3.

Mathews: Paul the Dauntless. Ch. 7.

Deissmann: St. Paul. Ch. 5.

Wood: The Life and Ministry of Paul the Apostle. Ch. 5.

Stalker: The Life of St. Paul. Ch. 3.

CHAPTER VI

A GREAT DOOR AND EFFECTUAL

Acts 9: 10-30; 22: 10-11; Gal. 1: 16-17; II Cor. 11: 32-33

The experience on the Damascus road meant a complete transformation of the thought, the purpose and the activity of Paul. No one goes through so vital a change as this without a struggle that hurts. To break with the past, to cast aside what is dear in tradition and association, to turn one's back on the things that inheritance, training and education have made both honorable and precious, is a course of action that demands resolution and courage. For a man whose nature was as intense as we know Paul's to have been, such a break is doubly hard. The adjustment to the new life could not be made in an instant nor without a real struggle. The beginnings of the process of adjustment were made in those first days in Damascus.

Ananias

Read Acts 9: 10-25, 22: 10-21 and compare these stories told by Luke with Paul's own story in Gal. 1: 16-17. Note the place given to Ananias in the story as told by Luke. In Paul's own story, where he is summarizing and giving only the essential points, he does not mention this phase of the ex-

perience, but we can easily imagine how in telling the story orally to Luke, Paul would relate the part that Ananias had played and would dwell on the comfort that had come to him through the helpfulness of this new friend. Note the sympathetic approach to Paul on the part of Ananias in the phrase, "The God of our fathers" (Acts 22:14), which linked the new experience with Paul's traditional mode of thought. Surely there was help and comfort for Paul in the tenderness and understanding of Ananias, in the reassurance that he gave as to the meaning of the great experience, and in the mere fact of his human companionship in those trying days.

Forgetting the Things that were Behind

As we attempt to picture those days of troubled thought in Damascus, we realize the questions that must have been present in Paul's mind—questions of his future plans, of his relation to his past life, of the meaning of the two great realities that had been borne in upon his thought and of what his grasp on them demanded of him. There must have come back with gripping force the picture of those events in Jerusalem where he himself had caused the death of men and women for no other reason than that they had pledged their faith to this same Jesus whom he now knew as his Master and Lord. Doubtless there came before his eyes with startling vividness the picture of Stephen giving

his full measure of allegiance to this same master. Surely, not only at Jerusalem but here in Damascus, Paul was saying to his Lord, "And I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee, and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him." Distress and horror must have accompanied every recollection of those days and it demanded stern effort to keep remorse and self-reproach from gaining control in his thought. Had he yielded to the temptation to dwell on the past, it would have meant despair and the complete crippling of his effort. Paul knew whereof he spoke when he said, "Forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on toward the goal," and it was out of the depths of his own experience that he wrote to the church at Corinth, "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."

Paul had a tremendous adjustment to make in his own thinking, and with it must go another, also difficult and demanding courage, the adapting of himself to others' thought of him. With this thought in mind, read Acts 9:13, 26:21, and see what Paul had to undergo in convincing others of the sincerity of his new position. What did it mean for Paul that he must ask as a favor the privilege of becoming the humblest learner in the new group, and must plead for their faith in him, laying him-

self open to the charge of turncoat? It was no light task to win the confidence of his new colleagues, but he had an even harder one in the explanations that must now be made to those who had been looking for his leadership in the struggle against Christianity. To the Jews in Damascus who were eagerly awaiting his help; to the High Priest in Jerusalem, from whom he had received his letters appointing him to the mission of persecution; to Gamaliel, whose hopes were high for this pupil of his; and not least, to his own family, who would be struck with horror at his allying himself with this heresy, he must now explain this strange step and make clear the strength of his new purpose. For a man like Paul, sensitive by nature, strong in affection, and sympathetic in feeling, this meant real suffering. For a man proud-spirited, accustomed to leadership as he was, it meant an utter humbling of his pride and a complete forgetfulness of self. Those days in Damascus were days of hard thinking. Adjustments were being made in his own ideas and in his relations with his fellow men. They were days that tested heavily the courage and the resolution of Paul. See Acts 9:11 for the secret of his poise.

Read Gal. 1:17. It was a soul-stirring experience that Paul had met. Thoughts were crowding to his mind, bewildering and disturbing, challenging every power, mental and spiritual. He could not yet see his way through, and yet, beneath the turbulent agitation there was an underlying sense

of security, a quiet confidence that God would lead him eventually to the right issue.

Arabia

In such a state of mind Paul craved quiet and a chance, alone with his God, to find his balance again, to think his problem through, and to find his own place in relation to this new order of thought. We can well understand this desire for prayer and thought, a time away from his friends and away from the pressing demands of life, to order his thoughts and to plan out a program of work. Back in the wide spaces of Arabia, perhaps in the desert, perhaps in some quiet village, Paul sought this solitude. Exactly what this time of quiet meant to him we do not know from any written record, but it is not hard to imagine that back there in the country that had been the earliest home of the Semitic peoples, Paul thought through both the old and the new experiences and found in his new spiritual leader the fulfillment of all that was best and finest in the religious thought of Israel, found in the new principle of love a higher expression of the old Mosaic law, and realized that his own grasp on this gospel sent him forth to tell its meaning to the world. The Damascus road experience had shown him new truth; the experience in Arabia made this gospel his own. Thinking and praying he came to realize the power of Jesus Christ in a human life and from that time on, that gospel was not merely his, but his to give.

“ Let no man think that sudden in a minute
All is accomplished and the work is done;—
Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it
Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun.

“ Oh the regret, the struggle and the failing!
Oh the days desolate and useless years!
Vows in the night, so fierce and unavailing!
Stings of my shame and passion of my tears!

“ How have I seen in Araby Orion,
Seen without seeing, till he set again,
Known the night-noise and thunder of the lion,
Silence and sounds of the prodigious plain!

“ How have I knelt with arms of my aspiring
Lifted all night in irresponsive air,
Dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring,
Blank with the utter agony of prayer!

“ Shame on the flame so dying to an ember!
Shame on the reed so lightly overset!
Yes, I have seen him, can I not remember?
Yes, I have known him, and shall Paul forget?’’*

What does Gal. 1:16 suggest as to Paul's individual contribution to the interpretation of Christ's message?

Is it possible for every Christian to make some gift to Christianity through his own individuality? For every race?

In what forms do you meet to-day the attitude that Christianity is an Anglo-Saxon religion?

* Myers: *Saint Paul*.

How do you account for the idea and how do you combat it?

From the stay in Arabia, Paul came back to Damascus burning with enthusiasm for his new message, eager for work, but hardly yet able to fit himself into his place in the Christian group. Read II Cor. 11 : 32-33 and Acts 9 : 23-25 to see how vigorous was the activity against him. Opposition from those in authority led to his flight to Jerusalem, but here again he met difficulty in gaining the confidence of the disciples. The friendly word of Barnabas, however, brought him into close relations with Peter and James, and then followed days of close companionship and mutual sharing of experience.

The Beginnings of Work

With what earnestness and eagerness must the two men, Peter and Paul, have related their individual experiences, and questioned each other about the reality and the potency of this new gospel, building together foundations for later work which neither one could have achieved alone! With what fervent questionings Paul must have sought from Peter knowledge of the earthly life of this Jesus of Nazareth whose friendship he was only beginning to understand!

Trace the story of Peter's friendship with Jesus and contrast this gradual realization of the divine mission of Jesus with Paul's more sudden grasp of this truth without the basis of daily companionship.

Tarsus

Again in Jerusalem, Paul met the distrust of people, perhaps because of his too aggressive championship of the new cause, and anger was so strong against him that he was forced to leave the city (Acts 9:29-30). From Jerusalem he went back to Tarsus, his own home city, and remained there probably ten years. How these years were occupied we have little in the record to tell us. They may have been, as Ramsay suggests, "ten years of quiet work within the range of the synagogue and its influence." Possibly there were village tours, giving Paul the opportunity to tell his gospel in the districts around Tarsus; surely there must have been hours of study and thought and long talks with friends and teachers in which he was giving the reason for the faith that was in him. As he touched men of other faiths, in this busy, cosmopolitan city, he was finding his new gospel challenged at every point. He could not meet, as he must have done in Tarsus, the philosophies then current in the Hellenistic world, nor the oriental mystery-religions that were gathering converts through all the Mediterranean country, without testing his own gospel by them, and proving once more the foundations of his faith. There must have come something of enrichment to his own thinking from this contact with other faiths, and surely in the consciousness that in all these strange and often grotesque cults men were seeking after communion

with God, there would be a spur to his resolution to bring to them the knowledge of that "more excellent way."

In Damascus, in Arabia, in Jerusalem, and in Tarsus, Paul was going through a period of testing and of trial. Our record of these years is incomplete, but from the brief story as we have it, and from the results that can be seen in Paul's later work, we know that they were not inactive years. To the building up of conviction, to the strengthening and steadying of faith, and perhaps to the beginnings of actual missionary work itself, these years were dedicated. The soundness of their preparation for service is attested in the effective work of the apostle who went forth from this experience, an ambassador of Christ to the Gentile world.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the real meaning to Paul of the experience in Arabia?
2. In the discovery of his own relationship to this new gospel what steps did he go through?
3. What responsibilities did he face?
4. What does his action suggest as to the Christian's responsibility for both thought and action?
5. What value was there for Paul in the gradual progress into the work?

6. What lessons did he learn through the apparently unsuccessful work in Damascus and Jerusalem?
7. Would another course, midway between chief persecutor and chief witness, have been possible for Paul?
8. Had he been content merely to accept Christianity in a passive fashion, what would have been the result for him? for the cause of Christ?
9. What tendencies do you see in the church to-day that indicate a merely passive acceptance of Christianity on the part of its members?
10. In how far can such an attitude be rightly termed Christianity?

SUGGESTED READING

McGiffert: A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age. pp. 161-168.

Matheson: The Spiritual Development of St. Paul. Ch. 4.

Wood: The Life and Ministry of Paul the Apostle. Ch. 6.

Robinson: The Life of Paul. pp. 59-65.

CHAPTER VII

NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK

Acts 2: 44—4: 36; 6: 7; 8: 1, 14, 25; 11: 19-30; 13, 14,
15: 35; Gal. 2

During the years which were serving to prepare Paul for his life task, the movement which had had its beginnings in the persecution of the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem had been steadily moving forward.

The Growth of the Christian Community

Gradually and quietly the little company “of them that believed” (Acts 4: 32) had been extending its influence, until now, in Acts 9: 31, we read of “the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria.” Trace this growth of the community briefly, by reference to the following passages:

Acts 2: 44-47.

Acts 4: 32-35.

Acts 6: 7.

Acts 8: 1, 14, 25.

Acts 11: 19.

What contribution to this general movement did Philip make? (Acts 8: 26-40.)

What is the particular importance of his work?

How do you estimate his methods of work?

What problems were forced upon the Christian community by his success?

The summary of the expansion of the community, which we have noted in Acts 9:31, may be said to mark the close of the first period of growth in the church. With the story of Peter and Cornelius in chapter 10, we approach a new stage in its development, a new problem to be faced. Review briefly the story of Peter and Cornelius, noting the following points:

(a) The character and position of Cornelius and the class of people of whom he was representative.

(b) The traditional principles and prejudices that Peter must overcome in order to accept the responsibility of the errand.

(c) The criticism that would inevitably follow upon his acceptance of it.

(d) The decisive nature of the step taken and of the conclusion stated by Peter in Acts 10:35.

(e) The bearing of this incident on the development of the church, and its relation to Paul's life task.

Do you judge that the church at Jerusalem, accepting Peter's defense of his action, looked upon the event as exceptional, or did it seem to them a test case which should settle the precedent for the future?

The Church in Antioch

In the course of the broadening movement whose

outlines we have been tracing, the church at Antioch had had its beginning. Founded by men of Cyprus and Cyrene, at the time of the dispersion of the church from Jerusalem, it had extended a welcome to Greeks as well as Jews and was prospering in this innovation. Read Acts 11:19-26 and note the stages there recorded in the growth of the church at Antioch. The importance of this city, then capital of the Roman province of Syria, renowned for its commercial and literary interests, and called by Josephus the third city of the empire, next to Alexandria and Rome, would make significant to the church at Jerusalem this "report concerning them," and it was natural enough that they should send a delegate to carry the greetings of the mother church to this new one, and to serve to unify the interests of the new and the old communities. Barnabas was the man selected for this mission (Acts 4:36), and the success of his work is attested in the steady growth of the church.

What qualities can you see in Barnabas, even in this brief mention of his work, that would help to account for his success?

Paul, an Authorized Worker in the Christian Church

To this vigorous, thriving new church, where new policies were originating, where first the followers of Jesus were called Christians, Paul, summoned by Barnabas to be his helper, came with all

his alertness and readiness for action, to begin in an authorized and official relationship, his work for the Church of Christ. With what eager enthusiasm would Paul welcome this summons from the generous-hearted Barnabas, who had befriended him in Jerusalem when the other disciples had questioned his sincerity! And now in this new field, where already the problem of the status of the Gentile in the church had begun to be felt, Paul, with his cherished purpose to preach Christ to the Gentiles, would feel a real call to service, and find scope for the working out of his plans and hopes. Note evidences of the strength and the spirit of the church of Antioch, both in the story of the relief expedition to Jerusalem in Acts 11:27-30, 12:25, and in the plan for a missionary journey by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:1-3.

The First Missionary Tour

The story of Paul's first missionary campaign is recorded in Acts 13 and 14. Read the record as a whole, tracing the course of the journey on a map, and then note in particular the following points:

(a) The occasion of the journey and the preparation for it.

(b) Paul's command of the situation and his success in his contact at Paphos with two important contemporary types; the keen, sceptical Roman official, who looked for a faith that could satisfy his reason, and the sorcerer, who stood as the repre-

sentative of a system of religion then prevalent in which magic and superstition took precedence over reason.

What dramatic elements do you find in this first recorded incident of the journey?

(c) Paul's method of work as evidenced by the story of his stay in Antioch in Pisidia.

Does the course pursued by Paul here seem to you the logical one?

(d) Paul's dealing with the pagan people at Lystra.

Compare the situation with that at Pisidian Antioch and see how differently it must be met.

Compare the speech in the synagogue at Antioch with the short one in Lystra and note the different approach to the point which is central in both.

To what tests were Paul's powers of leadership put in this experience?

Perhaps the highest test of Paul's zeal for the work that this journey brought him, came at the point when, having reached at Derbe the limits of the Roman province, he must choose for the return trip between the direct route eastward through the Cilician Gates, and the way of retracing his steps through the cities where persecution and threatened death had met him. That he preferred to go back by the way that he had come and face the dangers of the way, shows how dear the project had become to him and how much it meant to him to greet once more the friends that he had made upon this jour-

ney. And so it is that a wealth of devotion to his friends and to his cause speaks through the simple record of the return journey. "They returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and that through many tribulations, we must enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed" (Acts 14:21-23).

Study the closing verses of chapter 14, and note the welcome that Paul and Barnabas received on their return to Antioch. It is the record of the first Christian missionary meeting. This was no gathering of a few enthusiasts, nor had there been any need of a rally to interest the many. It was the whole church, gathered because it was genuinely eager to hear the report on work for which they held themselves definitely responsible.

The Council at Jerusalem

Paul had made his first great gift to the church in his daring to take the initiative in opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, but a more aggressive step than this must yet be taken. Acts 15 relates the story of Paul's definite stand for liberty before the church in Jerusalem, and in the judgment of many scholars, we have Paul's own account of this same event in Galatians 2. The contention that

Gentiles must become Jews before they could be Christians was being vigorously pressed, and it was a position that centuries of Jewish thought and practice had honored. But Paul, confident that any such policy of exclusiveness was foreign to the spirit of the gospel of Christ, had put freedom to the test in this great missionary experiment, and out of the conviction of his soul and the proof of his own experience, he pleaded for the liberty that meant the life of the church. The decision of the council, which granted the freedom for which Paul sought, with only such concessions as were "strongly advised in the interests of peace and unity,"* was a victory that saved the church from a narrow, cramped existence, from a provincial limitation and sent it forth with a gospel worthy to go into all the world. Paul had put into terms of life and experience his message that "there can be neither Jew nor Greek; there can be neither bond nor free, for all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

QUESTIONS

1. Trace in its big outlines the growth of the church from the time of the first persecutions in Jerusalem to the council at which Paul defended the cause of the Gentiles. What causes were producing this growth?

* Ramsay: *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, p. 172.

2. What reasons can you see for the shifting of the center of influence and progress from the church at Jerusalem to that at Antioch?
3. What definite things were accomplished by the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas?
4. What necessitated Paul's stand for liberty at the Jerusalem conference?
5. How does the spirit of exclusiveness in religion, which he was combating, assert itself to-day? How should it be met?
6. What changes would be necessary in the Christian church to-day to make it a thoroughly democratic institution?

SUGGESTED READING

Ramsay: St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen. Ch. 3.

Wood: The Life and Ministry of Paul the Apostle. Chs. 8 and 9.

Mathews: Paul the Dauntless. Chs. 12 and 14.

CHAPTER VIII

IN JOURNEYINGS OFTEN

Acts 15: 36—19: 41; I Thess. 2; I Cor. 2: 1-5; 4: 11-12;
II Cor. 11: 23-31

Paul's first missionary journey had pointed the way to a "church throughout all the world," and his cherished purpose had begun to emerge from the realm of vision and take its place in the world of reality. The urge of the great task was upon him, and now the call was even more insistent because it came in terms of human friendship and human need. "And after some days, Paul said . . . 'Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare' " (Acts 15: 36).

Paul's Journeys

Back through the same Galatian country he went, encouraging, strengthening, cheering the Christian groups which had been established on the first journey. And greater things still awaited him. Responding to a call that he knew to be divine, he set aside plans for work in Bithynia, and crossed over the Ægean Sea to bring his gospel to a new continent. From city to city, even to Athens, the

center of learning, where he must pit his message against the philosophies of the whole Grecian world, thence to Corinth, the busiest commercial city of Greece, and across to Ephesus he journeyed before he turned his face eastward again to Jerusalem and Antioch. But even his second journey only made his yearning more eager and his hope more insistent. It meant a wider knowledge of human need, a clearer call for help, and again he fared forth to bring in answer to that need, the gospel that was love. This time the field that claimed the major part of his time was that intervening country between the Phrygio-Galatian section and the Grecian peninsula. In Ephesus, the capital city of the province of Asia, he worked for more than two years, after visiting once again the churches established in Phrygia and Galatia. At the close of these years in Ephesus, came a rapid tour of Macedonia and Achaia, and then the return voyage to Jerusalem, where he greeted the elders of the church and "rehearsed one by one, the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry" (Acts 21: 19).

Conditions of Travel

This, in the rough, was the field of Paul's missionary effort. The familiar map of the Mediterranean country, on which we trace the course of these three journeys, conveys but little to us of their reality. To understand what they actually involved is a

difficult task for us to-day. To approach it, we must put ourselves back into a time when the land which lay around that great sea comprised almost the whole circuit of civilization. These were world tours in times when travel, though frequent enough, was an adventure that involved weariness, suffering and danger. Paul must trust himself to ships that had but imperfect mastery over contrary winds or angry seas; he must face the dangers of travel on foot over great mountain ranges, across hot, dusty plains, and through swampy country where the pestilence of fever threatened. Often, to be sure, he could count on the firm Roman highways that connected important centers of the empire, but again, as was true of the journey from Perga in Pamphylia up to the Pisidian highlands, he must traverse a wild mountain country, whose roads were sometimes mere rocky passes, and where the traveler was subject to attack from bandits and even from wild beasts. Paul says himself of his journeyings, "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail; in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II Cor. 11:25-27).

Paul's Method of Work

Paul, the traveler, must be ready to meet every emergency of the road, and he must be ready also to handle many a problem during his sojourns in the towns and cities. To see how, in differing communities, Paul varied his method and place of work to suit the existing conditions, study the following passages:

Acts 13: 14-16.

Acts 14: 8 ff.

Acts 16: 13.

Acts 17: 17 ff.

Acts 19: 8-9.

What do you judge was Paul's preferred method of procedure in a new place?

What points in his method, as evidenced in these passages, would you recommend to the modern missionary worker?

The worker who journeyed from place to place, must adapt himself, not only to new environment, but also to new types of people. With this thought in mind, read Paul's speeches in Antioch (Acts 13: 16 ff.), Lystra (Acts 14: 15 ff.), Athens (Acts 17: 22 ff.), Jerusalem (Acts 22), noting with care points at which a special appeal is made to the particular type of audience which each community would furnish.

At what points does Paul reveal his greatest eagerness in speaking?

What is his most important message?

What differing types of personality can you mention among the individuals with whom Paul dealt on his journeys?

How do you account for his broad appeal?

Plans for His Journeys

Paul, the traveler, must be willing to go or to stay, as the exigencies of the situation demanded. He must be ready to travel rapidly from place to place (see Acts 17), or to settle down for a long stay when the needs of the community so demanded (see Acts 19). For glimpses of the principles by which Paul guided his decisions in these matters, consult:

Acts 16:6, 7, 9.

Acts 18:21.

Acts 18:9.

Acts 13:2.

Study in particular Acts 16:6-10, and note Paul's confident faith that God would lead him to the right place for his work. See also his readiness to adapt his plans as new light came. Note that the guidance came sometimes in the form of circumstances which prevented the fulfillment of plans, sometimes in the form of a realization of needs to be met. Observe also that there were periods of doubt and uncertainty, and that, at best, he did not expect to see the way clear for a long time ahead. Estimating needs that he saw and his own power to meet them, examining circumstances and treating them as evidence to be weighed and judged,

pondering the matter overnight, and earnestly praying, he arrived at his conclusion, and immediately set out to translate the conviction into terms of action.

What steps that Paul took to determine the voice of conscience are open to us?

Can we expect as clear leading as he had?

What do you think Paul meant in Gal. 2:2 when he said, "I went up by revelation"?

Persecution

Paul, the traveler, must be ready to face opposition, and even persecution. Study Paul's conduct in imprisonment and persecution in:

Acts 13:44-50.

Acts 14:19-20.

Acts 16:19-34.

Try to analyze his command over situations. Is there any hint in these passages of rejoicing in persecution (Matt. 5:11-12)? Compare Paul the persecuted missionary, with Paul the persecutor, breathing out threatenings and slaughter.

Is the change greater in circumstances or in character?

What has produced the change in character?

Read I Thess. 2:2. How do you account for the fact that being shamefully treated made him "wax bold"?

What considerations would urge to a contrary course, either giving up the journey entirely, or working in a less aggressive fashion?

What would be the determining factor in Paul's decision?

For a glimpse of the brighter side of Paul's experience as he traveled, read Acts 17:10-14, and think how refreshing such a welcome and such an unprejudiced response to the teaching would be after repeated rebuffs, and rejection of his message. But note that even here, opposition must be faced, perhaps even harder to endure because of its unfairness, incited as it was, by those whose prejudice and narrowness would not allow a free and honest estimate to be made of his gospel.

Distress and suffering there were, discouragement and inward questioning, doubt and perplexity over the next step, but here was a traveler who could face with victorious courage every affliction that his travels brought him,—the perils of the way, the problems of missionary service in constantly changing circumstances, the disappointment of apparent defeat, the distress of rejection, of active opposition, and even of persecution; who, looking back on the whole experience, could say in a humble, yet holy exaltation, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound; in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:11-13).

The Recompense

And he was not without his reward, a deeper one than could be found in any external circumstance. His recompense lay in the little groups of friends in city after city, who, through his fellowship and his sufferings, were coming to know the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "For ye are our glory and our joy" (I Thess. 2:20). "And for this cause, we also thank God without ceasing that when ye received from us the word of the message, ye accepted it" (I Thess. 2:13). "I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you" (Phil. 1:3). This, and his steadily increasing sense of fellowship with his Lord, made worth while all the labor and all the pain. He was a co-worker with his Lord in a business that was worth the cost. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3:10), this was the goal, and this his highest reward.

QUESTIONS

1. What demands did Paul's travels make upon his endurance, his adaptability, his initiative?
2. What was the measure of success that he himself saw?
3. What is your estimate of his success?
4. What evidence have we that Paul could not depend upon a commanding presence in making a first impression?

5. What hints are there of physical limitation?
6. What are the means that Paul used in winning men to Christ?
7. Analyze and explain Paul's leadership and his command over situations.
8. In how far may we expect as definite guidance from God as we find Paul experiencing?
9. Characterize and explain his conduct in persecution.
10. In what forms does the modern Christian meet persecution?

SUGGESTED READING

Stalker: The Life of St. Paul. Chs. 5 and 6.

Wood: The Life and Ministry of Paul the Apostle. Chs. 11, 12, and 13.

Edwards-Cutler: A Life at its Best. Ch. 11.

Deissmann: St. Paul. Chs. 2 and 8.

CHAPTER IX

MORE THAN CONQUEROR

Acts 20—28; Rom. 15: 22-32; II Cor. 8: 1-4; 9: 1-4

The call of the great empire was sounding always for Paul. His was a world vision, and to him a world vision meant a world task. In the hope that he cherished, in the purpose to which his life was dedicated, he saw this great Roman empire, new-born in the faith of Jesus Christ. From province to province he traveled, covering the circuit "from Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum" (Rom. 15: 19), and now the dream of bringing his message to the city that was the center of the Roman world seemed possible of fulfillment. A Roman citizen, he yearned to preach his gospel in Rome. Read Acts 19: 21, Rom. 15: 22-32, and note how firm a hold this longing had taken upon him. But a more immediate duty claimed him first.

The Gentile Controversy

All through the years of his ministry, the old controversy about the status of the Gentiles in the church had been pressing. The council at Jerusalem (see Chapter VII) had attempted a settlement, but had achieved only a compromise. All the strength of tradition, of national pride, of preju-

diced conviction from years back stood against Paul's liberal view. Always he must be fighting the old position that Gentiles must conform to the Jewish law before they could become Christians, and trying to make clear the essential nature of the Christianity for which he stood, its splendid breadth and freedom. But the opposition was both spirited and persistent. So warm was the feeling, that delegates were sent out by the conservative party to the districts where Paul had worked, to urge the claims of the old, narrow position. Cleverly and often insidiously these agents worked, to discourage faith in the apostle and to destroy his work, and Paul was forced in many cases to see the people whom he loved turning from him, and the work that had been his life, undermined. But he could not let this opposition go unchallenged. Letters were dispatched to the churches where the hostile work had been done (see Gal. 1 and 2, I Thess. 2); friends were sent to assure them of the honesty of his work; and when he could, he went himself to make it clear that self-interest was not his motive, and that narrowness and exclusiveness had no part in the Christian gospel.

The Gift of the Jerusalem Church

And with his genius for understanding human nature, he had grasped at a constructive enterprise for welding together the factions of the church, a plan which should also serve to carry out the decree

of the Jerusalem council that Paul should take upon himself the responsibility for the poor of the mother church. A gift from the Gentile churches of the four provinces, Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia, for the poor of the Jerusalem church, had been arranged as evidence of the friendly interest of the Gentile communities and as a testimony to the essential unity of the church in all the world. The response from the Gentile churches to this plan of Paul's was most cheering (see II Cor. 8: 1-4, 9: 1-4), and the importance of the enterprise made Paul feel it necessary for him to accompany the delegates of the churches to Jerusalem, for the presentation of the gift. Long and careful planning had gone into this project, and important results were expected from it, and for its sake, the long-anticipated visit to Rome must be deferred.

Paul's Journey to Jerusalem

Read Acts 20: 1—21: 16 for the story of the journey to Jerusalem. Note the growing realization on Paul's part, as the journey progressed, that the visit to Jerusalem meant danger and possible death. Follow his increasing resolution as the danger became more and more evident, and see its strength in his words in Acts 21: 13. As you trace the journey, watch for evidences of the affection of his converts for Paul, and of their interest in his welfare.

What does the speech at Miletus (Acts 20: 18 ff.)

reveal of the method and spirit of Paul's work among the Gentiles?

What does it reveal of his own personal life?

Paul's resolution had been tried on the journey to Jerusalem, but it was put to the test in the city itself. Read the story of his experience in Jerusalem and Cæsarea in Acts 21:15—26:32, and try to make real the meaning to him of the following elements in it:

(a) The reception accorded him by the brethren.

(b) The distrust of the Jews.

(c) His defense and arrest.

(d) His plea before the council.

(e) His rescue from the Jews who plotted against him.

(f) His imprisonment in Cæsarea.

Contrast Paul's dignity and fearlessness in each instance with the bearing of those who attacked him.

Try to picture to yourself what the vacillation on the part of his captors would mean to a man with hopes and plans like Paul's, and what inaction in a prison would mean to a man of his temperament.

Study the narrative closely to see exactly what caused Paul's arrest, and what brought about the prolonged imprisonment.

What estimate do you make of Felix and of Festus?

Why did Paul refuse the offer of Festus for a new trial?

What is the reason for the additional hearing in the presence of Agrippa?

What are the most significant features of Paul's address before Agrippa?

His Appeal to Cæsar

Paul's appeal to Cæsar was one that no Roman official could deny. The right to such a trial was his by reason of his Roman citizenship, and to Cæsar he must be sent as soon as opportunity offered. The dream of a visit to Rome was to be realized, but in how different a fashion from the way that he had pictured it—not as a herald of good tidings, a bringer of great gifts, but as a humble prisoner in chains, an old man on whom suffering and toil and disappointment had left their mark. And yet, prisoner that he was, the man who had learned the secret of being “sorrowful yet always rejoicing” (II Cor. 6:10), must still be coming in the spirit of that splendid declaration that he had previously made to the church in Rome, “For as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel.” Like his Lord, he had “stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” when the danger of death awaited him, and now in that same spirit, he was ready, in coming to Rome “not to be bound only, but to die” (Acts 21:13).

The Voyage and Shipwreck

The story of the voyage to Rome is one of the most dramatic and vivid narratives that we have in the whole story of Paul's life. Read Acts 27: 1—28: 16, and notice the graphic details that make the experience so real to the reader. In each crisis of the journey, note Paul's command of the situation and his power to bring cheer, and to inspire courage in his fellow passengers.

What points reveal the dangers of navigation in those days?

Gather all the evidence you can from this passage as to Paul's attitude toward physical danger.

What is the contribution of this story to our estimate of Paul as a worker with men?

From the danger and almost despair of shipwreck, and the delays and anxieties of the remainder of the voyage, the arrival on the mainland of Italy must have been indeed a welcome change. The cheer and comfort that the greeting from brethren in Puteoli afforded after these months of danger and stress we may well imagine, and the grateful safety of a quiet week in their midst. The entrance into the city of his imprisonment itself was again to Paul an event that partook of the nature of a triumph. For here in this western world where he himself had never come before, he was met and welcomed by those who, because of his vision and his labor, had come to share "in the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3: 8). No won-

der that "he thanked God, and took courage" (Acts 28:15) when he saw the little group of the brethren, whose welcome was too eager to await his arrival in the city, and who came, braving the disapproval of the authorities, to greet him out on the Appian Way.

"What were they then, the sights of our discerning
Sorrows we suffer, and the deeds we do?

"Lo, every one of them was sunk and swallowed,
Morsels and motes in the eternal sea;
Far was the call, and farther as I followed,
Grew there a silence round the Lord and me."*

Rome

Into the city that was called eternal, but whose destruction lay not far hence, came this prisoner in chains, whose gospel was one day not only to conquer the great empire, but to go into the uttermost parts of all the earth. And it was with this business of sending forward the gospel of Jesus Christ, that he was concerned, during the years of his imprisonment in Rome. We cannot know fully of his life there, but the brief record in Acts (see chapter 28:16-30) tells us that his work continued, even though he was guarded always by a soldier, and from his letters we know that he was making use of every opportunity, so that his bonds "became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian

* Myers: *Saint Paul*.

guard; and to all the rest'' (Phil. 1:13); and he became in truth "an ambassador in chains," "to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:20). In the house of his somewhat lenient captivity, friends could come to him freely and he could write to those at a distance. The letters that went forth from his imprisonment, speaking an intimate tenderness and affection for the friends from whom he was separated, have become the heritage of the church in all the centuries following, and the precious possession of Christians everywhere. Whether, as some have felt, he was tried and released, and later brought back to trial, or whether his condemnation came at the close of the two years which are recorded in Acts, we may feel confident that he was busy always making known to men "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

His Death

Of the manner of his death we cannot know. Tradition tells us that he died a martyr in Rome, but the details of circumstance are only to be conjectured. Of the spirit of that death, however, there can be no question. We know that he went "down to the gates of death, loyal and loving." The confident faith, the exultant hope, the self-forgetful love that had determined his living must also determine his dying. As through the long years of his labor and his sufferings, so at the end would

he prove himself “more than conquerors, through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

“ Yea, thro’ life, death, thro’ sorrow and thro’ sinning
He shall suffice me, for he hath sufficed:
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.”*

QUESTIONS

1. In what sense did Paul’s arrest and his imprisonment both in Judea and in Rome further his work as a missionary?
2. In what sense were these events an interruption of his work?
3. What temptations to disloyalty lay in his experience under arrest?
4. Summarize the arguments which seemed to Paul most cogent for his defense in his various trials.
5. What was the motive of his self-defense?
6. What evidences do you find in Paul’s experience as a prisoner of his respect for authority? of his quick-wittedness? of his tact?
7. What qualities in Paul’s character are revealed in the story of the voyage and the shipwreck?
8. In what sense may he be called a “conqueror” in his imprisonment in Rome?

* Myers: *Saint Paul*.

9. What evidence have we that he did actually rise superior to personal considerations in such humiliating circumstances as those which he must face after his arrest in Jerusalem?
10. What grounds had he for feeling that his work had failed? What gave him the confidence of triumph?

SUGGESTED READING

Stalker: Life of St. Paul. Chs. 9 and 10.

Ramsay: St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen. Ch. 13.

Wood: The Life and Ministry of Paul the Apostle. Chs. 18 and 19.

Mathews: Paul the Dauntless. Chs. 32 and 36.

Robertson: Epochs in the Life of St. Paul. Ch. 10.

CHAPTER X

THE GREATEST OF THESE

Acts 20: 17—21: 6; Philemon; Rom. 16; Phil. 4

A persecutor, a murderer, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, Paul first appeared among the followers of Jesus. A man of compassionate tenderness, an exemplar of Christian friendship, he went to his death, a martyr for the sake of the gospel, the heart of whose message was love.

Paul, the Friend

But the fiery vigor of the young assailant of Christianity was not lost in the gentleness and sympathy of the mature, mellowed Christian. Paul remained, to the end, a man of forceful energy, of sturdy determination, of uncompromising adherence to principle; and his genius for friendship, that was the balance for the sterner side of his nature, was due to no softening of the fiber of his character. It was rather that his complete dedication of all that was strong and resolute in him to a purpose that was love, had made possible the expression of all his strength in loving relations with men.

Read I Cor. 9: 19-23, and see Paul's own statement of the breadth of his ideal. Adaptability to

every type of humanity—this was his aim, adaptability, as the first step into friendship that should express in human living his Christian purpose and ideal.

What are the dangers to the ordinary man in such an ideal?

Wherein lay Paul's safeguard from this danger?

Happily we can know Paul's genius for friendship, not only in terms of his ideal, but also in the actual relationships of his life. The picture that the record gives us is not that of a man whose dealings with men were coldly studied or consciously striving to work out an ideal. It is the picture of an affectionate life, winning friends easily, naturally, by the irresistible warmth of an intense, loving temperament. The record of his missionary labors is a story of powerful friendships, and the letters that he wrote to the churches where he worked, are crowded with friendly messages to those whom he loved. A worker, busy with a world task, he could yet pause "to smile with kind eyes, and be a man with men."

Barnabas

Of those who came closest to Paul in the comradeship of service, we know first of Barnabas, the apostle who trusted him, and stood sponsor for him when he was most in need of friends (Acts 9:26-27), and who made for him his first opportunity for active service in the Christian community (Acts 11:25). Study the following passages for glimpses

of the character of this generous-hearted friend: Acts 4:36, 9:27, 11:23, 11:29-30. We know Barnabas also, as a companion in service, through the story of the first missionary journey (Acts 13 and 14), and beneath the record of their cooperation in work, can be traced a growing recognition on the part of Barnabas, that in this younger man whom he had befriended was a greater than himself, one capable of assuming command, and to whom it was right that he should defer. A disagreement over plans for the second journey (Acts 15:37-38) resulted in a separation that must have meant sorrow for both friends, but we know that the memory of this friendship remained with Paul, and his thought turned with respect and admiration to Barnabas when he was justifying to the Corinthian church his own apostleship (I Cor. 9:6).

Timothy

Timothy, Paul's "own son in the faith," was one of his closest friends. Probably converted by Paul on his first visit to Lystra, Timothy was ready for service with him by the time he came again. To see the qualities that Paul found in this earnest young convert, read II Tim. 1:5, 3:15 and Acts 16:1-3; and then in Phil. 2:19-22, see how completely these gifts were dedicated to the work of the kingdom. Read Acts 17:14, 19:22, and 20:4-6, I Thess. 3:1-8, to see the scope of his work and in I Cor. 16:10-11, I Thess. 3:1, observe the deep tenderness and fatherly affection, with which Paul refers

to Timothy. That he shared Paul's imprisonment, we know through his joint authorship in three of the letters that came from the captivity (Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:1, Philemon 1).

Titus

Titus, who was Paul's trusted co-worker, and who is mentioned in his letters with genuine affection and commendation, is not named in the story as given in Acts. But from the letter to the churches in Galatia, we learn that he went to Jerusalem with Paul (Gal. 2:1) when the council over the Gentile problem was held. From II Corinthians, we know of his work with Paul on the missionary journeys (II Cor. 2:12-13, 7:6, 8:23), and of his serving more than once as a delegate to Corinth on business that demanded both tact and skill (II Cor. 12:18, 8:6, 8:16-24). Paul's tender affection for this young convert of his, and pride in his work, shines out in almost every mention of him. Paul calls him "my partner and fellow-worker" (II Cor. 8:23), and again he says, "But thanks be to God, who putteth the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus" (II Cor. 8:16), and "Nevertheless, he that comforteth the lowly, even God, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (II Cor. 7:6).

Priscilla and Aquila

As he journeyed from city to city, Paul was always enlisting new friends in work for his great cause. Priscilla and Aquila, his "fellow-workers

in Christ Jesus," who later revealed their devotion to him in their willingness to lay down their lives for his sake (Rom. 16:4), were doubtless drawn to him first by the fact of their common trade. Study Acts 18:1-3 and 18:18-28, and gather what you can of their history and the value of their work in the community.

What were the rewards and the responsibilities that fell to their lot by reason of their hospitality to Paul?

Read I Cor. 2:3 and try to imagine the cheer and help that would be afforded Paul by the cordiality of these fellow-workers. See also II Cor. 11:9 for evidences of Paul's special need at this time. Observe in I Cor. 16:19 the leadership of Priscilla and Aquila in the church.

Paul counted among his friends both men of influence and the humblest of the world's workers. To get an impression of this striking breadth of friendship, read the little book of Philemon, a personal letter written from captivity to a wealthy friend in Colossæ, pleading for another friend, a runaway slave. Observe the tact of the writer in dealing with so delicate a matter as the reinstating of a slave who had probably robbed his master of money, as well as of his own service.

What indications are there of Paul's love for Philemon and for Onesimus?

What does the letter reveal of Paul's conception of friendship?

State in your own words the service Paul hoped to render to Onesimus. To Philemon.

Other Friends

These are but a few of the friends whom the apostle gathered about him, as he journeyed. Others, the story of whose relationship with him we know more or less in detail, are Silas, the companion of his travels and his sufferings (Acts 16—18); Luke, whom he called the beloved physician (Col. 4:14); Mark, who became in the years of his imprisonment “a comfort to him” (Col. 4:11); Peter, who conferred with him at the outset of his ministry and gave him “the right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9), and Lydia, the business woman of Philippi, and the staunch supporter of the new church (Acts 16:13-15). And many there are, whose names have grown familiar through the friendly mention of them in Paul’s letters, but of whose experience we know but little: Tychicus, “the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord” (Eph. 6:21, Col. 4:7, Acts 20:4); Aristarchus, his “fellow-prisoner” (Col. 4:10, Acts 19:29, 27:2); Archippus, his “fellow-soldier” (Philem. 2, Col. 4:17); Epaphras, “the beloved fellow-servant and faithful minister” (Col. 1:7, 4:12 and Philem. 23); Epaphroditus, his “brother and fellow-worker” (Phil. 2:25-30, 4:18); Stephanas, who with his household was ministering unto the saints (I Cor. 16:15, 1:16), and hosts of others, whose names we know only through greetings sent them in the letters

(Rom. 16) or who appear unnamed, a group of those who loved him, and came with tender solicitude for his welfare, to bid him Godspeed upon his journey (Acts 20:36-38).

Paul's Gift of Friendship

Glimpses like these of a man's power with men send our thoughts forward to find the secret of his influence. A single, brief narrative of a busy, hurried life, a few letters dispatched either from imprisonment or from the midst of crowding duties, have revealed Paul's extraordinary ability to live in the lives of others. If we could know more of the intimate details of his daily living, how much more might be revealed of this capacity for friendship! But even as it is, there stands forth from this all too meager record, the figure of a man to whom friendship was of such supreme importance, that we cannot know the man apart from his friends. It is the picture of a man of deep and genuine affection, who had brought his friendship to the highest level of consecration. And the secret lies deeper than in a winsome personality, or a ready approach to the surface of men's lives. Paul was winning men, not to himself, but to a cause so great and so worth while, that it could call forth every best effort; to a personality at the center of that cause, so wonderful that it could worthily claim the supreme allegiance of every man. He was calling men not merely to a manner of life but to cooperation in a world-wide project; to friendship with his

greatest Friend. It was the appeal of a tremendous enterprise; but it was more than that; it was a call to share in a divine and life-giving relationship. Sympathy with the hopes and failings of human nature (Rom. 7:19), understanding of the difficulties that his friends were meeting (Eph. 2:1-6, Gal. 4:19, 6:1 ff.), gentleness and tenderness in suffering (II Thess. 1:4), and genuine, whole-souled affection (II Cor. 6:13, I Thess. 2:7), all these had their parts in Paul's life of friendship, but the mainspring of his power with men was its motive, the utter loss of self in the supreme purpose to make the love of Jesus Christ real to men.

“Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea, verily and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things and do count them but refuse, that I may be found in him” (Phil. 3:7-9).

“To the end, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:17-19).

QUESTIONS

1. What differences in temperament, ability and circumstances do you find in those whom we know as Paul's closest friends?
2. How do you explain the breadth of his appeal?
3. From his relations with his friends, what would you estimate Paul's friendship ideals to be?

4. How many of these ideals do you find stated in Paul's hymn of love, I Cor. 13? What further points are added?
5. Find in the epistles as many examples as you can showing how naturally Paul's prayer included his friends; how inevitably his friendships sent him to prayer.
6. What does this indicate concerning the depth of his friendships and of the reality of prayer to him?
7. What qualities should a friendship hold to be characterized as thoroughly Christian?
8. What are the most common obstacles to completely Christianized friendships?
9. What dangers exist in limiting the range of our friendships?

SUGGESTED READING

McGiffert: A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age. pp. 423-439.

Speer: The Man Paul. pp. 171-192.

King: The Laws of Friendship Human and Divine.

Condé: The Business of Being a Friend.

CHAPTER XI

AN AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST

I Thessalonians; Philippians; Galatians

“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end that ye may be established” (Rom. 1: 8).

This yearning to make real to others what was deepest in his own life, was the controlling motive of Paul's missionary work. It sent him forth eager and resolute, carrying his message from city to city; it led him to enlist other workers, through whom he could multiply his efforts; and it prompted the letters that carried his counsel, his comfort, and his encouragement to his children in the faith. Through these letters, there has come down to us to-day a source of knowledge of the inner life of the apostle and of the gospel that he taught, that is more intimate and more accurate than any other record of his life could be. We look upon them now most frequently as a means of access to his personality and his faith, but surely their author never thought of them as an autobiographical record nor as a formal exposition of his belief. He did not attempt to present through them a complete philosophy, nor did he struggle for consistency.

His letters went out as the eager expression of a man's love for his friends; of his hopes for their spiritual growth; of his yearning to make them secure from dangers; and of his faith that the life in Christ meant freedom and joy for them. These were not essays; they were personal messages, that sprang from the heart of a busy life, and were the outreach of a man's affection and aspiration. They were sent to answer questions, and to meet needs that were immediate and pressing; but because they dealt with immediate problems in the light of eternal truth, they have brought to the Christian world an abiding source of spiritual strength and help.

The Letters to the Thessalonians

Of the ten letters which are commonly regarded as Paul's, two, and perhaps three, were written during the long stay in Corinth which constituted the larger part of the second missionary tour (I and II Thessalonians, and Galatians?); three were during the residence in Ephesus on the third journey (I and II Corinthians and Romans); and four were the expression of his constant thought for his friends during his imprisonment in Rome (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon). The two letters to the church at Thessalonica were written within a few months of each other, probably in the year 50 A. D. The first was sent in response to questions, brought to him by Timothy from the Thessalonians. They were troubled and perplexed about those of their number who had died, wonder-

ing how they could share in the promised return of the Lord. Paul's letter was one of exhortation to right living, and of reassurance to their faith in the resurrection of those who had died. This reassurance that the letter carried had visible effect, and some at least of the Thessalonian Christians took his words about the speedy coming of the Lord so literally, that they decided to suspend all labor and merely wait for the approaching end of all things. And so a second letter was sent back to correct the misapprehension, and to urge the Thessalonians to be constant and steadfast in their work, that they might prove themselves, by the faithful performance of their daily tasks, worthy to share in the blessings of the Lord's coming.

Galatians

About the date of the letter to the Galatians, and the place from which it was written, scholars are not in agreement, but it may have come from Corinth not long after the letters to the Thessalonians had been sent out. It is certain at least, that disheartening news had reached Paul from these churches in Galatia, for the conservative Jewish party which was always opposing his liberal gospel to the Gentiles, had taken advantage of his absence, to call in question both his gospel and his authority as an apostle. Paul's letter was a vigorous and spirited defense of his gospel of freedom, and of his own authority, as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been called "the Christian charter

of freedom.”* Its outstanding message was a vindication of Christian liberty: “for freedom did Christ set us free” (Gal. 5:1).

Paul's Correspondence with Corinth

During his long visit in Ephesus on the third journey, Paul was in close communication with the church at Corinth. The two letters to this church which have been preserved, mention another letter now lost (I Cor. 5:9), a visit which the apostle himself paid to Corinth (II Cor. 12:14), a visit from Timothy, who had been sent as Paul's representative (I Cor. 4:17), and reports that had come to the apostle through friends who had visited him in Ephesus (I Cor. 1:11). The two letters then, which we have, we are to think of as parts of an almost constant communication which was maintained between the apostle and this group of his converts. By the reports that had come to Paul from Corinth, he had learned of factions in the church, of a case of unlawful marriage, and of lawsuits among the brethren; and these were the subject of the first part of the first letter. Paul pleaded for unity in the faith and strict adherence to the highest principles of Christian morality and brotherly forbearance. The second portion of the letter is devoted to questions which the church at Corinth had asked him in their letter—questions dealing with marriage, with the conduct of their

* B. W. Robinson: *Life of Paul*, p. 147.

services, with their attitude toward food that others had offered to idols, questions of everyday right and wrong that had puzzled the new converts, and that they longed to submit to his more experienced judgment. With the care of a father for his children, Paul dealt with each question in turn and even while great religious issues and world-sweeping plans were claiming his attention, he did not treat scornfully these minor details of everyday experience. And from the consideration of such details of behavior, there sprang his great hymn that exalts love as the essential motive power for the Christian conduct of life :

“ Love suffereth long and is kind,
Love envieth not, love vaunteth not itself,
Is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly,
Seeketh not its own, is not provoked,
Taketh not account of evil,
Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the
truth,
Beareth all things, believeth all things,
Hopeth all things, endureth all things,
Love never faileth.”

The part of Paul's correspondence that we know as II Corinthians is held by some to be two letters rather than one, one of which was written from Ephesus, and one later from Macedonia, perhaps Philippi. Whether it was originally one letter, or a group of letters, later collected by Paul's followers and preserved together, we do not feel certain; but the letter as it stands, reveals again

Paul's genuine concern for the church at Corinth. It is a warm defense of his own apostleship against a faction that had opposed him there, and an appeal for steadfastness on the part of the church. The depth of Paul's yearning over his converts speaks in the close linking of his anxiety and care for them with his sufferings in shipwreck, stoning, hunger, and scourging, all of which he had endured for the gospel's sake. As he narrated the story of these trials, he added, "Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches" (II Cor. 11:28).

The Letter to Rome

Paul's great desire to go to Rome had, at this time, to yield to the necessity of the journey to Jerusalem, and the letter that he sent in his stead to the converts, is full of expressions of his hope to be with them later. His anxiety lest the Roman church should be led away to a narrow and legal form of Christianity, urged him to send in advance of his visit this statement of his gospel of freedom in Jesus Christ. By reason of this purpose which it was to meet, the letter to the Romans gives a somewhat more formal defining than the other letters give of the essential positions of his gospel—of the righteousness of God; of the meaning of faith; and of the way of salvation. Won out of his own experience, first under the Jewish law, and

then through his faith in Jesus Christ, his gospel rings with intense conviction and strong feeling.

The Captivity Letters

The four letters, Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, which he wrote from his imprisonment in Rome, speak of his steady care and thought for the brethren during his separation from them. The letter to the Philippians is an outpouring of his love for the converts at Philippi, of his satisfaction in their spiritual growth, and of his gratitude for their friendship, with an exhortation to joy and to optimistic faith on their part. Ephesians and Colossians are companion letters, urging unity and steadfastness in the faith, and stout resistance to heresy or any perversion of the gospel. The letter to Philemon is unique, in that it is a personal note addressed to an individual. This glowing appeal to one Christian friend on behalf of another, at the opposite end of the social scale, carried Paul's urgent hope that each one, in the delicate situation before him, should rise to the highest level of Christian generosity and sympathetic understanding. Paul identified himself so closely with this problem of the reinstating of the fugitive slave, that he wrote to Philemon, "If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself" (Philemon 1:17).

These ten letters which are preserved to us today form doubtless only a small part of Paul's whole correspondence. Whether or not the letters

to Timothy and Titus, which we call the Pastoral epistles, were written in full or in part by Paul himself, scholarship has not fully determined; but in either case, they undoubtedly reflect his spirit of friendly cooperation in dealing with those who worked under him, and his triumphant courage as he faced the end of his work. What other letters there were, now lost, we cannot know, but in these that have been preserved, there is given to us a picture of a life that was steadily reaching out to other lives, spending and being spent for the sake of a faith that was supremely dear.

Paul's Gospel

As we thus trace briefly the occasion and purpose of the letters, we see that they were sent to give counsel or to answer questions, to encourage or to warn, to reprove or to commend, to caution or to stimulate, as given situations demanded. They went out to accomplish definite purposes in times and in conditions far different from ours; but because they carried the religious convictions of a great and brilliant mind, together with the intense feeling of a generous Christian spirit, they have carried a gospel of abiding worth to all the Christian world. Although Paul's Christianity was not embodied in a formal statement in any one of his letters, yet the convictions that were vitally significant to him sprang again and again into words, in his handling of the problems of his converts, and these salient points in his belief we can gather

together from their setting, and can examine as indicative of the points that were essential to him in his working faith.

Study the following passages and try to summarize briefly Paul's views about :

The meaning of faith. Rom. 5. Gal. 5:5-6.

The way of salvation. Rom. 6—8.

The indwelling Christ. Rom. 8:11. Gal. 2:20-21.

The righteousness of God. Rom. 1—3.

The results of the life of faith. I Cor. 13. Phil. 1:10. Gal. 5:22. Col. 1:9-14.

Christian liberty. Gal. 5.

The Christian task of happiness. Philippians.

The hope of eternal life. II Cor. 4:16—5:10. I Cor. 15. Col. 3:1-4.

The world-wide scope of the Christian gospel. Col. 3:10-11.

How many of these points are distinctively characteristic of Paul?

How many are stressed in modern Christianity?

The Gospel and the Man

In one of the letters to the church at Corinth Paul wrote, "Out of much affliction, and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears." From prison he wrote to the church at Philippi, "Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." To the church at Colossæ he wrote, "For I would have you know how greatly I strive for

you.” Again from his prison, he wrote, “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called.” Everywhere as he wrote, Paul gave himself. Behind the writing and shining through its eager utterances, was the life, vivid, intense, forceful. The gift that these letters made to the Gentile world was not merely an interpretation of the Christian faith, but an intimate, living fellowship with a man who cared supremely for that faith. The gift that they make to the Christian world to-day is a gospel that bears upon it the impress of a vigorous and triumphant life.

“ Oh, could I tell ye surely would believe it!
Oh, could I only say what I have seen!
How should I tell or how can ye receive it,
How, till he bringeth you where I have been?

“ Therefore, O Lord, I will not fail nor falter,
Nay but I ask it, nay but I desire,
Lay on my lips thine embers of the altar,
Seal with the sting and furnish with the fire;

“ Give me a voice, a cry and a complaining,—
Oh, let my sound be stormy in their ears!
Throat that would shout but cannot stay for straining,
Eyes that would weep but cannot wait for tears.

“ Quick in a moment, infinite for ever,
Send an arousal better than I pray,
Give me a grace upon the faint endeavor,
Souls for my hire and Pentecost to-day!”*

* Myers: *Saint Paul*.

QUESTIONS

1. What points in Paul's Christianity need special emphasis to-day?
2. What points in his gospel seem to you out of date?
3. What do you mean by salvation?
4. Why is a conception of God's righteousness necessary to a full faith in his love?
5. Distinguish between Christian liberty and lawlessness.
6. Trace to its fullest implications in modern society Paul's doctrine of Christian liberty.
7. Discuss Paul's position that the life of faith in Christ yields ethical results.
8. Support the position that the belief in immortality is essential to the Christian faith.
9. What arguments are advanced against the world-inclusive task of Christianity? How do you meet them?
10. Was Paul's interpretation of international Christianity in advance of our Christian internationalism?

SUGGESTED READING

Gardner: The Religious Experience of St. Paul.

Morgan: The Religion and Theology of Paul.

McGiffert: A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age. Ch. 3.

Stalker: The Life of St. Paul. Ch. 7.

Hodges: How to Know the Bible. Chs. 17, 18 and 19.

Phelps: Reading the Bible. Essay 2, St. Paul as a Letter-writer.

CHAPTER XII

THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

Nineteen centuries have passed since Paul the Apostle fought his good fight and finished his course; and still men look back to him as the greatest leader, after Jesus, that the Christian faith has ever had. In all these years, men have come increasingly to recognize the strength of his leadership and the worth of his gift to Christianity. His ideals still direct the progress of the Christian faith; his activity still inspires new effort in the Christian cause; his words are still the medium for the expression of Christian thought and worship. Paul of Tarsus is to-day an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's service to his own time we have seen, as we have traced the story of his activity as a missionary to the Gentile world. Christianity as he found it, was a sect in Palestine. Christianity as he left it, had begun to be a world-religion. Paul the man of vision, grasped the ideal; Paul the organizer, brought the ideal into being. Many a man of prophetic insight fails to bring his purposes into life because his idealism knows so little of practical methods of work, but Paul, the Christian idealist, was still a man among men, a worker in the prac-

tical affairs of everyday life. As a missionary to the Gentile world, he was at work as we have seen, establishing groups of converts under an organization that steadily grew in ideals and in achievement. The method of his leadership was to inspire and stimulate, rather than to dominate or completely control, but still he put at the disposal of his friends all the resources of his experience and his faith. Founding a community of believers was only the beginning of his effort. Wherever he could, he returned to "visit the brethren in every city"; when he could not return himself to visit, he sent others to carry a message of inspiration and encouragement (I Thess. 3: 1-2); his letters carried his counsel and his help; even in communities where he himself had never been, churches were sharing in the benefits of his leadership, and were gaining the inspiration of his personality through his letters (viz., Colossians and Romans). It was a genuine instinct for organization that saw the need for uniting the churches in friendly sympathy and co-operation, through such an enterprise as the collection for the church in Jerusalem. But it was an even greater insight that strove to teach the churches independence, so that the movement should not suffer defeat when the inspiration of his personality should be withdrawn.

His power to see beyond the present emergency led him so to deal with those who looked to him for leadership, that they should grow in initiative and

independence, and become themselves leaders in the faith. "Not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation," he wrote to the Philippians (2:12). Intimate as his fellowship was with his converts, strong as the ties were which held them to him, yet he was urging them to accept the gospel that he brought, not on his word only, "but in power and in the Holy Spirit and in assurance." His leadership was a summons not to follow, but to lead.

Paul, the initiator of great plans, the organizer of a great enterprise, was also a great spiritual example to his own age. The utter devotion to a spiritual cause that taught him to "sum up all things in Christ," gave him superiority over every circumstance. He had learned in whatsoever state he was "therein to be content." The record of his missionary activity is a story of resolution in the face of physical danger, of discouraging conditions of work, of active opposition, of imprisonment, and finally, of death for the sake of the cause. It was a far journey from the attitude of helpless bewilderment on the Damascus road, to the spiritual mastery that expressed itself in his letters:

"For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1: 21)

"It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20)

and to the utter self-dedication to his ideal that could say in all humility, "Be ye imitators of me" (I Cor. 4: 16), but the journey had been made step

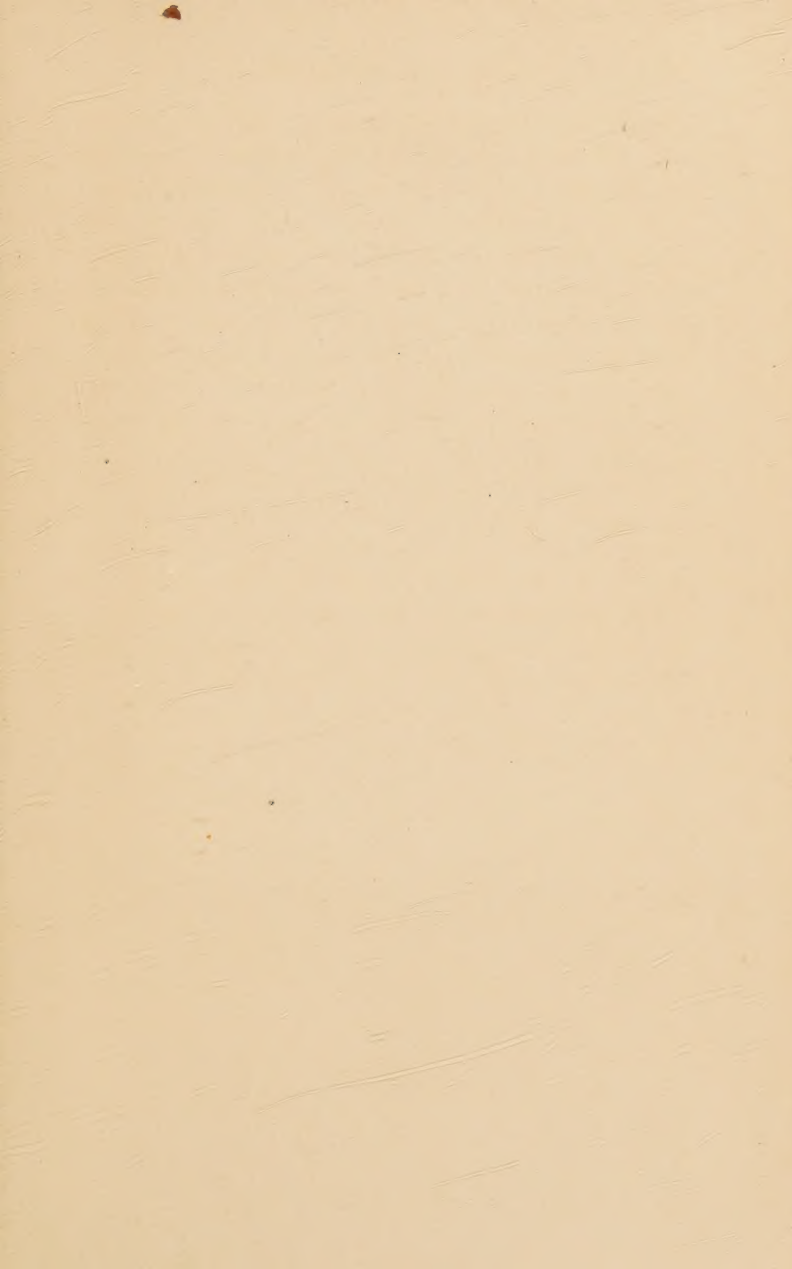
by step, till his allegiance to his spiritual ideal was dominant over every thought and every act.

By his life of activity and accomplishment, by the bright challenge of his spiritual achievement, Paul served his generation, and met the immediate need for leadership and organization in the beginnings of the Christian church, but the power of his message and his life belong, not merely to the first century. Whatever advice he gave about practices of living in a social order that has passed, he rested back upon spiritual principles that transcend the changes in thought and life that the centuries have brought, and it is upon these eternal truths that the emphasis of his teaching and living was laid.

His gospel never separated itself from the background of Jewish monotheism and ethics, but his interpretation of Christianity revealed the fact that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, was "the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named"; taught that God's supreme revelation of Himself in human life was not in a king for the Jewish nation, but in a Saviour, whose abiding spirit dwelling in the believer could bring the divine life into control; showed that the achievement of the Jewish ethical ideal came not through the legalistic observance of a moral code, but through the free and unrestrained working of the Christ spirit in man. Jesus had lived and died for the sake of the Kingdom of God on earth. The meaning of that life and death in all its universal

applications, Paul interpreted not only to the first century, but to all the generations that have followed. The sweep of his thought of God was limitless: "One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. 4:6). The Christ who lived in him, was a spirit who was "in all" (Col. 3:11). There were no bounds to his hope for mankind: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

It was a universal gospel, and his own purpose and plan included the whole world as he knew it. Limitless in its thought, his gospel must be limitless in its outreach to the world. His plans, his hopes, his confidence, pressed forward, knowing no bounds nor goal, "till we *all* attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).



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Paul the conqueror.

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